

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Bonesteel/Fairfax School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005

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Dates of On Site Visit: December 13, 2004

Date of Report: December 21, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student progress data
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- District annual needs assessment

Teacher Assistance Team (TAT): referral vs. nonreferral information
Needs assessment information (such as personnel, facilities, etc.)
Personnel training
Screening

Meets Requirements:

The district's child find activities are implemented annually through of a combination of informing the public through newspaper articles, annual screening programs and on-going referrals from a variety of sources.

The district comprehensive plan reflects policies consistent with the Special Education Program performance goals and indicators.

The district comprehensive plan has established procedures for the employment of special education personnel who have the special education endorsements as required in state rules, including child evaluators.

District staff has completed in-service training needs assessments provided by South Central Cooperative annually. Results were tabulated and provided to district administrators annually.

Needs Improvement:

Referrals: Written referrals were completed in 100% of case files. Teacher Assistance Teams are in place in both schools, but do not act independently of the special education program in the elementary.

Not Applicable:

The district does not have any private schools within the district or any students in out of district placement

Validation Results

Promising Practices

Through interview with the speech/language therapist, the review team identified a promising practice with the social skills groups that are conducted by the speech therapist and the school psychologist. These consist of three graded groups which meet every Friday. The groups are made up of students who have been referred by teachers or who have asked to attend. After a referral is made, the parents are contacted and permission is requested for the student to become a part of the social skills group. The activities within the group are designed according to specific difficulties the students are experiencing or social skills directly related to the age group of the students. This group is open to all students within the school and is comprised of students with and without disabilities.

Meets Requirements

The review team validates all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting the requirements for general supervision.

Through interview and file reviews, the review team also finds the school district meeting requirements in the areas of out of district placement and private school placement.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Numbers of children screened
- Preschool age
- School-age

Meets Requirements:

The district comprehensive plan policies support the provision of FAPE to students who reside in the district, group home, foster home or institutions by providing a free and appropriate education to all students who qualify. The comprehensive plan addresses the protection of students not yet eligible for special education services. The two individuals eligible for extended school year services were identified and appropriate documentation and permission was received.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements : The review team validates all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting the requirements for general supervision.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- General curriculum information
- Comprehensive plan
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel with designated certification

Meets Requirements:

In three of three initial evaluations documentation of informed parental consent was available. Parental consent for re-evaluation was obtained in three of three student files reviewed. All tests listed on the prior notice/consent were administered in six of six files reviewed. In eleven files reviewed, tests were given that were not listed on the prior notice/consent for evaluation.

Functional evaluation data was available in all areas of suspected disability in six of six student files reviewed. Specific functional assessment skills were summarized into a written report in six of six files reviewed. Transition evaluations were conducted for two of two students prior to their turning age 1six.

The district/agency has an ongoing child find process. The district/agency has a TAT team with two of three students being referred for special education assessments. Of three students that are referred for special education services, three are eligible and receive services.

Reevaluations were conducted at least every three years in three of three student files reviewed.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements :

The review team validates the following areas identified by the steering committee as meeting the requirements for general supervision: re-evaluation, continuing eligibility and eligibility determination.

The review team was not able to validate the findings in the areas of written notice and consent for evaluation and evaluation. Please see the out of compliance area for further information.

Out of Compliance:

Applicable ARSD(s) 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child.

In eight files reviewed, there was no evidence of functional assessment. The present levels of performance showed knowledge of student's strengths and weaknesses, but through the file reviews and teacher interviews, they were not conducting functional assessment and including those in a written report. In two files there was no transition evaluation conducted.

ARSD 24:05:30:05. Content of notice

The notice must include the following: A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report that the district uses as a basis for the proposal or refusal.

In three files reviewed there were evaluations given without consent. Two of the files did not have consent for transition evaluations and one did not address adaptive, visual motor and sensory evaluations. Five files did not contain any form of consent for evaluation. Two of them were for evaluations which were conducted on out of district placements and three were local re-evaluations.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure
- Review of access logs

Meets Requirements:

One hundred percent of parental right brochures checked in file reviews used by the district contain all required content.

Eleven out of eleven files reviewed showed that parental rights information is given to parents with every prior notice/consent sent and at every individual education program team meeting.

The district’s request for consent document contains all required information. The definition of consent is included on the consent for use by the district.

The comprehensive plan procedures address the appointment of surrogate parents. These procedures meet regulatory requirements. A list of individuals who would serve as a surrogate parent if needed is not available in the district at this time. The foster parent would typically be assigned as the surrogate parent if parental rights have been terminated.

Eleven of eleven student files reviewed contained a record of access and a list of types/location document.

The district has not had a request for a due process hearing within the past three years. Due process hearing procedures are specified in the district comprehensive plan.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements: The review team validates all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting the requirements for procedural safeguards.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (individual education program) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the individual education program team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are individual education program team, individual education program content, transition components for secondary individual education program s, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and individual education program related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher file review
- Student progress data

Meets Requirements:

Individual Education Program Written Notice: The district provided written notice five days prior to the Individual Education Program meeting in eleven of eleven files reviewed. Two parents waived the five day requirement. Eleven of eleven prior notices used by the district contain all of the required information above.

Needs Improvement:

Individual Education Program Team: In eleven of eleven student files reviewed, individual educational programs were reviewed annually. In six of six student files reviewed, individual education program meetings were held within 30 calendar days of receipt of the evaluation results. A regular educator was present at individual education program meetings in ten of eleven student files reviewed.

IEP Content: The present levels of performance in eleven of eleven files reviewed contained specific skills in the student's strengths, weakness and the student's involvement in the general curriculum. Present levels of performance are linked to functional evaluation in eleven of eleven files reviewed. Goals are linked to the present levels of performance in eleven of eleven files reviewed. Eleven of eleven individual education programs reviewed consistently contained skill based, measurable/observable annual goals. Hearing aid functioning was addressed in one of eleven individual education programs reviewed. Eleven of eleven individual education programs reviewed, documented the frequency, location, duration of modifications to be provided.

Transition: A statement of transition services/activities was documented in three of three files of students age 16 years old or younger if appropriate. Transition evaluations were administered in three of eleven student files reviewed. Student centered life planning outcomes for employment were documented in three of three files reviewed of students turning 14 years old. Student centered life planning outcomes for independent living were documented in three of three files reviewed of students turning 14 years old. A course of study was developed for students beginning at age 14 in three of three files reviewed.

Other IEP Requirements: Five of five parents surveyed indicated they receive a copy of their child's individual education program within a reasonable time. In eleven of eleven individual education programs reviewed, parents initialed that they received a copy of the individual education program. In eleven of eleven files reviewed the student's individual education programs were reviewed annually, on or before the date of the previous individual education program. Eleven of eleven individual education programs reviewed documented the beginning date of service to be as soon as possible after the individual education program was developed. Four of five parents surveyed indicated the services decided on at the individual education program meeting were started right away.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements: The review team validates the steering committee's findings in the area of Individual Education Program Written Notice.

Needs Improvement: The review team validates the steering committee's findings in the areas of Individual Education Program Team and Individual Education Program Content. The team was not able to validate their findings in the areas of Individual Education Program Content and Transition. See Out of Compliance for further information.

Out of Compliance

24:05:27:13.02. Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In two of the five files reviewed of individuals age fourteen or older, the individual education program did not address an outcome oriented process for future planning of employment and living arrangements. They were either blank or addressed previous employment.

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program

Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives. Annual goals should be designed to indicate activities the student will be working on. They are to be annual and measurable and should be reasonable (something the student can be expected to achieve in one year).

In eight files reviewed, the goals were not measurable.

- eg. **** will expand her receptive communication skills to an age appropriate level.
- **** will organize and express ideas through writing.
- **** will use vocabulary words to complete worksheet and apply to all subject areas.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the Individual Education Program is developed or reviewed, the Individual Education Program team must decide where the Individual Education Program services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Parent, student, general educator surveys
- General curriculum information
- Age at placement

Meets Requirements:

In 11 of 11 files reviewed, the specific special education program (goals and objectives) were developed prior to concluding placement on the continuum of least restrictive environments. The districts comprehensive plan provides procedures for determining placement options using the continuum of alternative placements.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements: The review team was not able to validate the steering committee's findings for the area of Least Restrictive Environment. See Out of Compliance for further information.

Out of Compliance

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program

Each student's individualized education program shall include An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the regular class and in extracurricular and non-academic activities. Justification statements are to use an accept/reject format which supports the information in the individual education program and clearly states why the placement is necessary to meet the unique educational needs of the student

In four files reviewed, the team found justification statements that did not address placement using the continuum of placement options. .

Eg. **** will participate with his peers during math instruction, art, music, recess, meals, computer, and physical education with no assistance from the special education teacher. He will receive help from a paraprofessional in the general classroom for science and social studies. He will receive special education services in the resource room for reading, grammar, spelling, and math assignments. A general classroom placement was rejected because **** needs modified assignments and one-on-one instruction in language arts and math.

Resource room accepted so **** would receive enough time in the resource room to complete math, reading and speech services.